

Amendment To The Claims

Please **AMEND** claims 20-23, 26 and 30-33.

Please **ADD** claims 39 and 40.

A copy of all pending claims and a status of each claim are provided below.

Listing of Claims

1 – 19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently amended) A single-use surgical scalpel, comprising:

- a) a molded plastic housing having an upper and a lower radiused edge, and ribbed interior ~~walls~~ wall surfaces, the ribbed interior wall surfaces of the molded plastic housing defining a channel for slidable engagement of a blade carrier, the channel comprising:
 - i) one open end through which a surgical blade is extended during use;
 - ii) a slot through the lower radiused edge for slidable engagement of an actuator/locking fin, the slot being adapted for retaining a the blade carrier in a surgical blade-extended position;
 - iii) a single-use indicator window; and
 - iv) a retaining element for engaging a distal end of a leaf spring; and
- b) wherein the a molded plastic blade carrier comprises comprising:
 - i) a first end adapted for engaging the surgical blade;
 - ii) a second end comprising a leaf spring to assist in surgical blade retraction, the leaf spring having a proximal and a distal end; and
 - iii) a central portion comprising the actuator/locking fin and a single-use indicator.

21. (Currently amended) The device of Claim 1 wherein at least one side of the first end of the ~~molded plastic~~ blade carrier is tapered to form a shimming plane at a position

which contacts a portion of the ribbed interior wall ~~surface~~ surfaces of the channel, the taper resulting in increased thickness of the first end of the blade carrier when measured in the distal to proximate direction.

22. (Currently amended) The device of Claim 2 wherein the end portion of one or more ribs of the ribbed interior wall ~~surface~~ surfaces of the channel which contacts the tapered portion of the blade carrier is molded to contain a complementary taper.
23. (Currently amended) The device of Claim 1 wherein the single-use indicator on the ~~molded plastic~~ blade carrier comprises a flexible plastic convex element which is positioned in, and viewable through, the single-use indicator window in the molded plastic housing when the surgical blade is in the retracted position, the convex plastic element being irreversibly altered when the blade carriage is advanced to expose the surgical blade.
24. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 1 wherein the exterior walls of the molded plastic housing further comprise raised molded fins in critical gripping locations.
25. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 1 further comprising a friction-fit or snap-on palm support.
26. (Currently amended) The device of Claim 1 further comprising a high-intensity lighting system whereby light is emitted from a fiber optic strand positioned above the surgical blade in a surgical blade-extended configuration.
27. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 7 wherein the high-intensity lighting system includes an adjustable lens enabling focal adjustment of a light beam emitted from the fiber optic strand.

28. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 1 wherein the molded plastic housing is a unitary construct, having a live hinge which defines the central line of the longitudinal axis in a hinge-open view.
29. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 1 wherein the retaining element for engaging a distal end of a leaf spring comprises a molded boss which engages a ring formed on the distal end of the leaf spring.
30. (Currently amended) A single-use surgical scalpel, comprising:
- a) a molded plastic housing having an upper and a lower radiused edge, and ribbed interior wall surfaces, the ribbed interior wall surfaces of the molded plastic housing defining a channel for slidable engagement of a blade carrier, the channel comprising:
 - i) one open end through which a surgical blade is extended during use;
 - ii) a slot through the lower radiused edge for slidable engagement of an actuator/locking fin, the slot being adapted for retaining a blade carrier in a surgical blade-extended position; and
 - iii) a single-use indicator window; and
 - b) wherein the a molded plastic blade carrier comprises comprising;
 - i) a first end adapted for engaging the surgical blade;
 - ii) a second end comprising a leaf spring to assist in surgical blade retraction, the leaf spring having a proximal and a distal end, the distal end of the leaf spring being joined to the housing by a live hinge; and
 - iii) a central portion comprising the actuator/locking fin and a single-use indicator.
31. (Currently amended) The device of Claim 11 wherein at least one side of the first end of the ~~molded plastic~~ blade carrier is tapered to form a shimming plane at a

position which contacts a portion of the ribbed interior wall ~~surface~~ surfaces of the channel, the taper resulting in increased thickness of the first end of the blade carrier when measured in the distal to proximate direction.

32. (Currently amended) The device of Claim 12 wherein the end portion of one or more ribs of the ribbed interior wall ~~surface~~ surfaces of the channel which contacts the tapered portion of the blade carrier is molded to contain a complementary taper.
33. (Currently amended) The device of Claim 11 wherein the single-use indicator on the ~~molded plastic~~ blade carrier comprises a flexible plastic convex element which is positioned in, and viewable through, the single-use indicator window in the molded plastic housing when the surgical blade is in the retracted position, the convex plastic element being irreversibly altered when the blade carriage is advanced to expose the surgical blade.
34. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 11 wherein the exterior walls of the molded plastic housing further comprise raised molded fins in critical gripping locations.
35. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 11 further comprising a friction-fit or snap-on palm support.
36. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 11 further comprising a high-intensity lighting system whereby light is emitted from a fiber optic strand positioned above the surgical blade in a blade-extended configuration.
37. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 17 wherein the high-intensity lighting system includes an adjustable lens enabling focal adjustment of a light beam emitted from the fiber optic strand.

38. (Previously presented) The device of Claim 11 wherein the molded plastic housing is a unitary construct, having a live hinge which defines the central line of the longitudinal axis in a hinge-open view.
39. (New) The device of Claim 1 wherein when the actuator/locking fin is advanced to extend the surgical blade, the single use indicator is one of irreversibly collapsed and inverted by contact with the ribbed interior wall surfaces.
40. (New) The device of Claim 30 wherein when the actuator/locking fin is advanced to extend the surgical blade, the single use indicator is one of irreversibly collapsed and inverted by contact with the ribbed interior wall surfaces.